

Argyro Kantara
University of Cardiff

INDEXING IN FAIRY TALES: EVIDENCE FOR THE ROLE FAIRY TALES PLAY IN CHILDREN'S CONCEPT FORMATION

Abstract

Starting from the basic premises of Schank's (1998) notion of *indexing* in story telling and the *representational approach of language* (Saeed 1996, 2003), this paper investigates whether fairy tales create initial indexes for children, that may (not) be re-indexed later in adult life, by reshaping their pre-existing experiences. More specifically, it focuses on the way fairy tales present several concepts already familiar to children, and whether this representation matches children's pre-existing experiences. The data collected comes from several of Grimm Brothers' fairy tales and consists of a corpus of 62839 word tokens. The fairy tales included were thematically related to general areas of everyday experience: *femininity*, *blackness*, *whiteness*, *day*, *night*, *being young*, *ageing*. The following semantically contradictory lexical pairs (listed with their text frequency) were examined in the expanded concordance, in relation to their collocations and semantic associations: (143) old – (58) young, (134) woman – (71) maiden, (116) day – (40) night, (63) white – (83) black. These were then compared with an adults' and a children's dictionary to check whether the collocations, semantic associations of the selected words as portrayed in the data, matched the societally accepted meanings found in dictionaries. The comparison indicated that, although the *connotative meanings* were included in the majority of *denotative meanings* that make up words' definitions in the adult dictionary examined, only five of them matched the *connotative meanings* of the words examined in the data. On the other hand, the way the above concepts/words were presented in the children's dictionary, was very simple, probably reflecting children's experiences. It seems, thus, that the concepts - at least some of them - presented in the fairy tales examined, do not "officially" relate to children's but to adults' experiences, functioning as an index that re-shapes children's pre-existing concepts.

Keywords

fairy tales, indexing, representational approach, concepts, context, co-text, collocation

1. Introduction

Schank (1998) suggests that children do not learn words from dictionaries but from experiences made into stories; the story aspect of words is much more common than we might at first suppose. If we apply his observation to fairy tales, we can claim that children experience several concepts such as witch, dwarf, dragon, castle through the imaginary world of fairy tales (the stories they are familiar with). These words have a meaning only in that world, since they do not trigger any associations in the concrete world in which children live. But what about words that trigger associations in the concrete world and of which children have experiences? How are they treated? To what extent do fairy tales re-index already familiar concepts and are thus responsible for children's concept-formation? These are the queries the present paper aims to answer by looking at the way fairy tales present several concepts, which I assumed are already familiar to children. The way these concepts are presented is then compared with an adults' and a children's dictionary to check whether the collocations, semantic associations of the selected words as portrayed in the data, matched the socially accepted meanings found in dictionaries.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Indexing

Schank (1998) claims that stories and scripts give us the necessary ground information to understand, evaluate and make sense of new experiences. Every story we already have, read, or listen to, has a Theme, Goal, Plan, Result, Lesson that *shapes* or *re-shapes* our understanding of the world according to our experiences; that happens by means of indexing. The *index* is constructed by observing events outside our memories. In order to make sense of those events, we label them in such a way that corresponds to labels we have previously constructed. Generalisations are what indices are made of and stories are remembered because they have lessons that are derived from them and serve as indices to memory.

2.2. The representational approach of language

Saeed (2003) mentions that in representational approaches of meaning, a language represents a theory about reality; about the types of things and situations in the world. In other words, meaning derives from language being a reflection of our conceptual structures. But what is a concept? Carroll (1967: 569) claims that concepts are: "...abstracted and often cognitively structured classes of mental experiences learned by

organisms in the course of their life histories.” He goes on to mention that experience is an internal or perceptual response to stimulation. Concepts can in the course of a person’s life become more complex, and since they are essentially idiosyncratic, particular individuals with particular histories of experiences classify them in particular ways. What is a word according to that view of language? Malinowski (1923), cited in Goodwin and Duranti (1992: 15) claims that:

A word is used when it can produce an action and not to describe one, still less to translate thoughts. The word therefore has a power of its own, it is a means of bringing things about, it is a handle to acts and objects and not a definition of them.

Carroll distinguishes between *denotative meaning* and *connotative meaning* of a word. He claims that denotative meaning is something that is socially prescribed while “... connotative meaning banks heavily on those aspects of concepts that are widely shared yet non-criterial and perhaps affective (emotional) in content” (Carroll 1967: 574). A meaning of a word is, for Carroll, a societally standardized concept since “...when we say that a word stands for or names a concept, it is understood that we are speaking of concepts that are shared among the members of a speaking community” (Carroll 1967: 574). Based on the aforementioned and also Vygotsky’s (1978) views, cited in Goodwin and Duranti (1992: 21):

It is in the coordination with the environment and other more competent members of their community that children come to take advantage of tools, a most important class of tools being symbols. Words are thus seen as but one example of tools that function as mediating devices.

The hypothesis this paper aims to validate is that fairy tales as a means of socialisation - apart from the family environment and prior to or simultaneously with the school environment - help children become familiar with the *societally-standardized concepts* of words thus serving as indexes in children’s concept formation.

3. Data collection and method of investigation

The data collected comes from eleven Grimm Brothers’ fairy tales and consists of a corpus of 62839 word tokens. The reason the Grimm Brothers’ fairy tales were chosen, was that they are the most widely read and popular ones, at least in the West, and the ones that almost every child reads. Even though they might be considered as old fashioned, as more modern fairy tales with different story lines are widely available, these traditional fairy tales are still the prototypes on which current fairy tales are based and which the latter may deconstruct. Thus, it is still worthwhile to

investigate how specific concepts are presented in the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales. The fairy tales included were thematically related to the general areas of experience I assumed formed basic pre-existing experiences for children: *femininity*, *blackness*, *whiteness*, *day*, *night*, *being young*, *ageing*. Then the following semantically contradictory lexical pairs (listed with their text frequency) were examined in the expanded concordance, in relation to their collocations: (143) *old*– (58) *young*, (134) *woman*–(71) *maiden*, (116) *day*–(40) *night*, (63) *white*–(83) *black*.

Rudd (1999) points out that children's literature is being policed by *rational* adults and that this has several drawbacks, one of them being that children's voices or perceptions are not taken into account. This is a serious drawback of my analysis too, since, although the *frame of reference*—the fictional world of fairy tales—might be the same both for me and the potential young readers, the experiences might be different and the angle of reading is (unavoidably) different; I cannot but read them as a "rational adult". To try and accommodate for the aforementioned drawback, and in an effort to triangulate my investigation, I decided to compare my findings both with an adult's and a children's dictionary addressed to native speakers. Dictionaries, of course, do not replace human beings and their interpretations, but since they portray the societally accepted meanings of words, and thus the concepts behind them, they served the purposes of the present analysis.

4. Analysis

4.1. Old-woman

The way the data was analysed was not strictly determined by the pairs specified beforehand, but by the way the words actually collocated in the data. For instance, *old* frequently collocated with *woman* (see Table 1 overleaf).

Old collocates with *woman* in eight sentences and once forms part of a simile "a woman as old as the hills". Moreover, *woman* collocates once with the approximate synonym of old, aged and *old* collocates once with the approximate synonym of *woman*, *dame*. *Woman* (see Table 2 overleaf) collocates once with false, four times with wicked, and once with the following: beautiful, wise and good. Twice *woman* is contextually associated, both with having a talent for folly, scolding a man but in her role as a wife with being beaten. Also twice, *woman* is contextually associated with king —interestingly not with queen —and not thinking highly of her husband. *Old woman* (see Table 1) collocates twice with good and is twice semantically related to a good deed. In the rest of the six sentences it is contextually related either to a powerful witch, or to employing arts of witchcraft.

1. Then he perceived an <i>aged woman</i> with a head which nodded perpetually, who came towards him, but she was a witch.	2. Suddenly the door opened, and a <i>woman as old as the hills</i> , who supported herself on crutches, came creeping out.	3. But the <i>good old woman</i> appeared again, and when she learnt the cause of her grief, she said, be of good cheer, my child.
4. Then Rapunzel lost her fear, and when he asked her if she would take him for her husband, and she saw that he was young and handsome, she thought, he will love me more than <i>old dame</i> Gothel does.	5. 'Be quiet,' said the <i>old woman</i> , 'I will soon divert it to you,' and by her arts of witchcraft, she so troubled the eyes of the coachman that he was half-blind, and she stopped the ears of the white maiden so that she was half-deaf.	6. Poor little snow-white had no suspicion, and let the <i>old woman</i> do as she pleased, but hardly had she put the comb in her hair than the poison in it took effect, and the girl fell down senseless.
7. And suddenly the branches twined around her, and were two arms, and when she looked around, the tree was a handsome man, who embraced and kissed her heartily, and said, 'You have delivered me from the power of the <i>old woman</i> , who is a wicked witch.'	8. I may let the worthy <i>old woman</i> in, thought snow-white, and she unbolted the door and bought the pretty laces.	9. Her tears began to flow again, but the <i>good old woman</i> said, do not be afraid, my child, rest a while, and in the meantime I will look to your work.
10. The <i>old woman</i> was not long in coming, she comforted her and said, lie down there in the shade and sleep, and I will soon build the castle for you.	11. And she told him of the treachery of the <i>old woman</i> who had taken away her three children and hidden them	

Table 1. Text sentence collocations of *old*.

To sum up, in the given corpus of fairy tales, it seems that the concept of *woman* acquires mostly *negative connotations* based on its contextual associations: twice women treat their step-daughters badly, they are being portrayed as having talents for folly, they scold and reproach men, and they are six times portrayed as showing disrespect or betraying men, as wicked and never satisfied. Even when evaluative phrases — in Aronoff's (1980) terms — collocate with *woman*, giving it *denotative meanings*, this is justified in one case only, by explicitly stating what the woman in question has done to be evaluated highly: "It lay so concealed, and the way was so difficult to find that he himself would not have found it, if a wise woman had not given him a ball of yarn with wonderful properties". In the remaining two cases there is either an explicit contradiction of the evaluative phrase "beautiful but proud and haughty" or an evaluative phrase that is not justified but used in a rather neutral way, forming part of a greeting "good day my good woman".

In the given corpus of fairy tales, the concept of an *old woman* also acquires *negative connotations* based in its contextual associations: old women are wicked witches, do not love their protégées, possess arts of witchcraft, they are traitors. Even when evaluative phrases are used forming *denotative meanings*, in two cases we know why they are being positively evaluated (explicitly positive semantic collocations): "But the good old woman appeared again, and when she learnt the cause of her grief, she said, be good of cheer, my child", "Her tears began to flow again, but the good old woman said, do not be afraid, my child, rest a while, and in the meantime I will look to your work", while in the third, "I may let the worthy old woman in, thought snow white, and she unbolted the door and bought the pretty laces", there is an implicit contradiction of the evaluative term (later on in the story we learn that the old woman was not worthy at all, but she was Snow-White's step-mother, a witch trying to kill her) serving as an implicit negative semantic collocation of old woman.

Based on the aforementioned, it seems that the *lesson* — to use Schank's term — of the given corpus of fairy tales concerning the concept of *woman*, is that a woman is usually capable of doing bad deeds and an *old woman* is usually most of the times a witch trying to harm you. At this point it is important to note that the collocation *old man* also appeared in the concordance, but none of either the collocations or the semantic associations was semantically loaded; they were simply referred to as men of advanced years.

1. The <i>woman</i> became her step-daughter's bitterest enemy, and day by day did her best to treat her still worse.	2. She was a <i>beautiful woman, but proud and haughty</i> , and she could not bear that anyone else could surpass her in beauty.	3. Said the <i>woman</i> , I am the king, and you are nothing but my husband.	4. But the <i>wicked woman</i> when she had reached home went in front of the glass and asked, looking-glass, looking-glass, on the wall, who in this land is the fairest of all.
5. It lay so concealed, and the way was so difficult to find that he himself would not have found it, if a <i>wise woman</i> had not given him a ball of yarn with wonderful properties.	6. The <i>woman</i> , however, would listen to nothing that he had to say, but scolded and reproached him.	7 'Yes,' said the <i>woman</i> , 'now I am king'.	8. You paragon of beauty, said the <i>wicked woman</i> , you are done for now, and she went away.
9. She drove her oxen away, and the peasant thought, that <i>woman</i> has a perfect talent for folly, if she really brings the money, my wife may think herself fortunate, for she will get no beating.	10. Then he fell into a rage, and said, <i>false woman</i> , she betrayed and deserted me whilst I was asleep.	11. Still she could not touch the heart of the <i>wicked woman</i> , she was never satisfied, it was never enough.	12. But, when the king had gone out, and no one else was present, the <i>wicked woman</i> seized the queen by the head, and her daughter seized her by the feet, and they lifted her out of the bed, and threw her out of the window into the stream which flowed by.
13. Then the <i>wicked woman</i> uttered a curse, and was so wretched, so utterly wretched that she knew not what to do.	14. Little snow-white looked out of the window and called out, good-day my <i>good woman</i> , what have you to sell.		

Table 2. Text sentence collocations of *woman*.

4.2. Young

Young was semantically loaded in four sentences, where it collocates with girl, beautiful, a king's son, handsome (see Table 3 below). In the first two sentences the young and beautiful girl or handsome king's son suffered from a step-mother and a wicked witch respectively. In the third sentence, Rapunzel compares the love a young and handsome man could give her with the lack of love she experienced while living with her old mother. In the last sentence, a bride for the king's son is going to be selected from the beautiful (not ugly) young girls in the country.

1. There was once upon a time <i>a girl who was young and beautiful</i> , but she had lost her mother when she was quite a child, and her step-mother did all she could to make the girl's life wretched.	2. And while she was looking at him, and becoming aware that he was <i>young and handsome</i> , he awoke, sat up in bed, and said, I am a king's son, and was bewitched by a wicked witch, and made to live in this forest, as an old gray-haired man.	3. Then Rapunzel lost her fear, and when he asked her if she would take him for her husband, and she saw that he was <i>young and handsome</i> , she thought, he will love me more than old dame Gothel does.	4. It happened, however, that the king gave orders for a festival which was to last three days, and to which all the <i>beautiful young girls</i> in the country were invited, in order that his son might choose himself a bride.
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Table 3. Text sentence collocations of *young*.

The *lesson* of the selected fairy tales concerning the concept of *being young*, based on its collocational and contextual associations, seems to be that, when you are young there is possibility that you might suffer (1,3) but if you are handsome or beautiful, love/marriage "will solve your problems" (2,3,4). Thus *young* in the given corpus of fairy tales acquires a *positive connotative meaning*.

4.3. Maiden

The next word, *maiden*, collocates once with beautiful and wise, and six times with beautiful (see Table 4 overleaf). Once, the beautiful maiden in question has to be freed from her enemies (9). Twice, a beautiful maiden forms part of similes:

1. She was a <i>beautiful and wise maiden</i> , and as she did not see the ring on his arm, she said, 'I shall never believe that you have brought the apple, until I see the ring on your arm.'	2. And the queen came one day on foot from the castle, and went walking by the pond, and saw the <i>well grown maiden</i> sitting there, and said, 'What a fine strong girl that is.'
3. But the king's son said, I will go with you and bear you company, for he wished to see to whom the <i>beautiful maiden</i> belonged.	4. But suddenly he was freed from all pain, and felt fresh and healthy as if he had awakened from sleep, and when he opened his eyes he saw the <i>maiden</i> standing by him, <i>snow-white, and fair as day</i> .
5. The <i>maiden</i> cut a bit off her heel, forced her foot into the shoe, swallowed the pain, and went out to the king's son.	6. The king had promised that he who would venture should have his daughter to wife, and she was the most <i>beautiful maiden</i> the sun shone on.
7. The king, however, wanted to see it for himself, and next evening went thither, and when the duck thrust her head in through the gutter, he took his sword and cut through her neck, and suddenly she changed into a most <i>beautiful maiden</i> , exactly like the picture, which her brother had made of her.	8. When Reginer came on this errand, his sister was glad, but the <i>black maiden</i> was jealous of her good fortune, and grew angry above all measure, and said to her mother, 'Of what use are all your arts to us now when you cannot procure such a piece of luck for me.'

9. He called to the second and cut his head off likewise, and then he killed the third also, and he was well pleased that he had freed the <i>beautiful maiden</i> from her enemies, and he cut out their tongues and put them in his knapsack.	10. Then the <i>maiden</i> was <i>obedient</i> , and put on the paper frock, and went out with the basket.
11. Then said the maiden, 'I should like to be as beautiful and fair as the sun,' and instantly she was <i>white and fair as day</i> .	12. He was charmed with the <i>beautiful maiden</i> , who was indeed as lovely as any picture.
13. He thought to himself, 'How can I give an <i>innocent maiden</i> into the power of the wild giants, who have evil in their minds?'	14. And when she rose up and the king's son looked at her face he recognized the <i>beautiful maiden</i> who had danced with him and cried, that is the true bride.
15. In the gateway stood a <i>maiden of beautiful form and fine face</i> , but she was quite black.	

Table 4. Text sentence collocations of *maiden*.

“He was charmed with the beautiful maiden, who was indeed as lovely as any picture”, “Then said the maiden, ‘I should like to be as beautiful and fair as the sun’ and instantly she was white and fair as day”. *Maiden* once collocates with the following: innocent, well-grown, fine, strong, snow-white and fair as day, obedient. These collocations and contextual associations have a *positive connotative meaning*; maidens are beautiful and even when a maiden is in danger, somebody is there to help her. Furthermore, the two evaluative phrases used that form *positive denotative meanings* (wise, obedient) are justified contextually, see sentences 1,10, adding another dimension to the positive indexing; that maidens can be wise and obedient, both positive, societally accepted characteristics.

But *maiden* in the given corpus is also contextually associated with negative characteristics. There is an implicitly negative contextual association in the following sentence: “In the gateway stood a maiden of beautiful form and fine face, but she was quite black” (sent.15), where although a maiden is ‘of beautiful form and fine face’ the use of *but* — according to Lyons (1995) — before black, implies that either it is unusual for a black maiden to be beautiful, or that, to describe a black maiden as beautiful is not the norm. In sentence 8, the black maiden is contextually associated with jealousy; a strongly negative association. Lastly, twice (5 and 11) a *maiden* is semantically related to vanity.

To sum up, it seems that the *lesson* of the fairy tales examined concerning the concept of *maiden* is that a maiden is beautiful when she is fair and white, she is obedient, innocent, might be wise or show signs of vanity, might be in danger but someone will help her and that a beautiful black maiden is unusual and might be jealous, the last two giving the concept of black maidens *negative connotational meanings*.

4.4. Day

The next word, *day*, is found twice forming part of similes, see Table 5 overleaf, where a maiden’s beauty is compared to a day’s beauty (2) and where the beauty of a well dressed female resembles bright daylight (10). In sentences (7) and (9) *day* forms a lexical item with *night* referring twice to endless mental pain: “I should have no rest day or night until I have seen it with my own eyes”, “And envy and pride grew higher and higher in her heart like a weed, so that she had no peace day and night”, or great effort: “The king ordered all the goldsmiths to be brought to him, and they had to work night and day until at last the most splendid things were prepared” (6). Lastly, *day* is being semantically contrasted with *night*; during day one’s work can be done, while at night the evil spirits that haunt the place, kill people (3).

1. She wished them <i>good day</i> , and knocked modestly at the door	2. But snow white was growing up, and grew more and more beautiful, and when she was seven years old she was <i>as beautiful as the day</i> , and more beautiful than the queen herself.
3. The miller told him that he could grind there very well by <i>day</i> , but not by <i>night</i> , for the mill was haunted, and that up to the present time whoseever had gone into it at <i>night</i> had been found in the morning lying dead inside.	4. The youth sat down in the garden and considered how it might be possible to perform this task, but he could think of nothing, and there he sat sorrowfully awaiting the <i>break of day</i> , when he should be led to death.
5. They walked the whole night long, and by <i>break of day</i> came once more to their father's house.	6. The king ordered all the goldsmiths to be brought to him, and they had to work <i>night and day</i> until at last the most splendid things were prepared.
7. I should have no rest <i>day or night</i> until I had seen it with my own eyes.	8. And thus, for their wickedness and falsehood, they were punished with blindness all their <i>days</i> .
9. And envy and pride grew higher and higher in her heart like a weed, so that she had no peace <i>day or night</i> .	10. Then he caused her to be dressed in rich garments, and she shone in her beauty like <i>bright daylight</i> , but no word could be drawn from her.

Table 5. Text sentence collocations of *day*.

Based on the contextual associations of *day* in the fairy tale corpus so far, it seems that day has mostly *positive connotative meanings* and in the cases where it forms a lexical item with *night* its meaning is either neutral, related to time as in the first three cases discussed (6), (7), (9), or it sustains its positive meaning by being contrasted with night as in the last (3). In the rest of the sentences, we come across the lexical item “break of day” twice in sentences (4), (5), the lexical item/greeting “good day” once in sentence 1, and in sentence 8, *days* forms the lexical item “all their days” referring to livelihood. All these are *positive denotative meanings*.

To sum up, it seems that the *lesson* of the fairy tale corpus examined concerning the concept of *day* is that day is something fair, bright, a signpost of female beauty and the time when good actions take place, all of these being *positive connotations*.

4.5. Night

The next word, *night*, apart from its *negative* contextual associations discussed above, when it forms a lexical item with *day* or is being semantically contrasted with it, is once contextually associated with black, sin and ugly, where all the above are connected with God’s punishment (see 1, Table 6 overleaf). In sentences (3), (6), (7), (8), we come across the collocation of “three nights”, referring either to the successive accomplishment of difficult deeds (twice) or to salvation thanks to a beautiful princess, after a succession of ordeals caused by black men. Lastly, we come across the semantics of evil things happening during *night*: “The next night the devils came and began their gambling anew” (2), or starting at *midnight*: “Everything was quiet, however, till midnight, when all at once a great tumult began, and out of every hole and corner came little devils” (5). Lastly, *midnight* is the time when a spell is broken (4).

Based on the above, it seems that the *lesson* of the fairy tales examined concerning the concept of *night*, is that it the time when evil things take place, people go through ordeals, and *midnight* is the time when either good turns to bad or the opposite, all of which are mostly *negative connotations*.

1. Then God was angry with the mother and daughter, and turned His back on them, and wished that they should become <i>as black as night and as ugly as sin</i> .	2. The next <i>night</i> the devils came and began their gambling anew.
3. And everything happened just as she had said, <i>the black men</i> could not force a single word from him, and on the <i>third night</i> the snake became a beautiful princess, who came with the water of life and brought him back to life again.	4. The spell was not to be broken until a girl came to us whose heart was so good that she showed herself full of love, not only towards mankind, but towards animals - and that you have done, and by you at <i>midnight</i> we were set free, and the old hut in the forest was changed back again into my royal palace.
5. Everything was quiet, however, till <i>midnight</i> , when all at once a great tumult began, and out of every hole and corner came little devils.	6. He let the host have no rest, until the latter told him, that not far from thence stood a haunted castle where any one could very easily learn what shuddering was, if he would but watch in it for <i>three nights</i> .
7. The maiden answered, 'You must pass <i>three nights</i> in the great hall of this enchanted castle, but you must let no fear enter your heart.'	8. Then the youth went next morning to the king and said 'if it be allowed, I will willingly watch <i>three nights</i> in the haunted castle.'

Table 6. Text sentence collocations of *night*.

4.6. White

The next word, *white*, collocates once with beautiful bride, beautiful, beautiful roses, beautiful bed, and a beautiful child in a shining dress, clean linen, all of which have *positive connotative meanings*, presenting either white people or things as beautiful and pleasant (see Table 7 overleaf). In the extended concordance we also come across a *white* little bird helping Cinderella in sentence (14), and in sentence (2) we come across the semantics of a *white* dove holding a golden key. In these two sentences *white* is used in a rather symbolic way being connected with “good news”. In sentences (8), (12), (13), we come across the semantics of a vivid mental picture of female beauty where the females in question are described as having a face “white as snow”, cheeks “red as blood” and hair “black as ebony”.

Lastly, *white* is only once used in a metaphorical *lexically composed expression*: “It ought to have been done long before this, said she, and grew white with anger, but she meditated something new” (9), that has *negative connotative meaning* and in another sentence *white* and *red* form a vivid mental picture contextually related to weakness, forming a *negative denotative meaning*: “But on the fifth morning the poor tailor could no longer stand up, and was hardly able to utter one word for weakness, his cheeks were white, and his eyes were red” (5).

Based on the above, it seems that the *lesson* of the fairy tales examined concerning the concept of *white*, is that, although white might be related with anger or weakness, usually white people or things are beautiful, clean, and desirable.

1. But the king married the <i>white and beautiful bride</i> , and rewarded her faithful brother, and made him a rich and distinguished man.	2. When she had sat there for a while, <i>a white dove</i> came flying to her with a little golden key in its beak.
3. When the step-mother came home with her daughter, and they saw that they were both as black as coal and ugly, but that the step-daughter was <i>white and beautiful</i> , wickedness increased still more in their hearts, and they thought of nothing else but how they could do her an injury.	4. Once when they had spent the night in the wood and the dawn had roused them, they saw a beautiful child in a <i>shining white dress</i> sitting near their bed.
5. But on the fifth morning the poor tailor could no longer stand up, and was hardly able to utter one word for weakness, <i>his cheeks were white, and his eyes were red</i> .	6. Afterwards two pretty little beds were covered with <i>clean white linen</i> , and Hansel and Gretel lay down in them, and thought they were in heaven.
7. She took the two rose-trees with her, and they stood before her window, and every year bore <i>the most beautiful roses, white and red</i> .	8. Soon after that she had a little daughter, who was <i>as white as snow</i> , and as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony, and she was therefore called little snow white.
9. It ought to have been done long before this, said she, and grew <i>white with anger</i> , but she meditated something new	10. And now snow white lay a long, long time in the coffin, and she did not change, but looked as if she were asleep, for she was <i>as white as snow</i> , as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony.
11. So she opened it, and found a <i>beautiful white bed</i> , and she prayed God to protect her during the night, and lay down and slept.	12. And the red looked pretty upon the white snow, and she thought to herself, would that I had a child <i>as white as snow</i> , as red as blood, and as black as the wood of the window-frame.
13. Then the queen looked at her with a dreadful look, and laughed aloud and said, <i>white as snow</i> , red as blood, black as ebony wood, this time the dwarfs cannot wake you up again.	14. Thrice a day Cinderella went and sat beneath it, and wept and prayed, <i>and a little white bird</i> always came on the tree, and if Cinderella expressed a wish, the bird threw down to her what she had wished for.

Table 7. Text sentence collocations of *white*.

4.8. Black

The last word, *black*, has various collocations and semantic associations in the corpus under analysis, which give the word *negative connotative meanings* (see Table 9 overleaf). In sentence 10 the use of *but* implies, according to Lyons (1995), that it is unusual for somebody to be both beautiful and vile, fair of face and black of heart: “The woman had brought with her into the house two daughters, who were beautiful and fair of face, but vile and black of heart”. We come across the same implication in sentence 12: “In the gateway stood a maiden of beautiful form and fine face but she was quite black”. In various sentences, *black* is contextually associated with negative things: a *black maiden* is contextually associated with jealousy (14), becoming *black* as night and ugly as sin is God’s punishment (16), *black* men force people to do things (18), *black* paws make children realise that it is not their mother knocking at the door (she does not have black feet) but it is the wolf which terrifies them (20). In two cases we come across a very vivid mental picture of a pitch *black* sky during a storm and *black* waves, *black* and thick sea that boils from below and makes a man afraid (3 and 8). In sentence 1, we come across the collocation of *black* and blue connected - once again - with punishment (physical this time). In sentences (5), (7) and (15) we come across the semantics of threatening *black* animals (cats, dogs, and bear) and twice a *black* dwarf blackmails/deceives people (9,11). Twice a *black* man exercises power over somebody (9, 11) and in (4) *black* men torture someone. In sentence 6 the wicked step-mother and step-daughter are described as *black* as coal and ugly, while the (good) step-daughter is *white* and beautiful. Lastly, once we come across an implicit *negative connotation* of *black* friend in the sentence 13: “And they got so used to him that the doors were never fastened until their black friend had arrived”; where the use of ‘got so used’ and ‘never’ implies that in the past – not like their present habit - they were not used to their black friend and fastened their door. Only once, in sentence 2, a little *black* manikin seems to be polite and compassionate to someone.

Based on the above, it seems that the *lesson* of the fairy tales examined concerning the concept of *black*, is that black people and animals are dangerous, threatening, and connected with evil.

1.You once fell on your head when you were a little child, and that affects you even now, but let me tell you this, if you do anything foolish, I will make your <i>back black and blue</i> , and not with paint, I assure you, but with the stick which I have in my hand, and the colouring shall last a whole year, you may rely on that	2.In order to drive his misfortune a little out of his thoughts, he went out to this field, and as he was walking to and fro in it, a little <i>black mamikin</i> stood suddenly by his side, and asked why he was so sad, and what he was taking so much to heart.
3.With that he reached the sea, and the sea was quite <i>black and thick</i> , and began to boil up from below, so that it threw up bubbles, and such a sharp wind blew over it that it curdled, and the man was afraid.	4.To-night come twelve <i>black men</i> , covered with chains who will ask what you are doing here, but be silent.give them no answer, and let them do what they will with you, they will torment you, beat you, stab you, let everything pass, only do not speak, at twelve o'clock, they must go away again.
5.But when he had made away with these two, and was about to sit down again by his fire, out from every hole and corner came <i>black cats and black dogs</i> with red-hot chains, and more and more of them came until he could no longer move, and they yelled horribly, and got on his fire,pulled it to pieces, and tried to <i>put it out</i>	6.When the step-mother came home with her daughter, and they saw that they were both <i>as black as coal and ugly</i> , but that the step-daughter was white and beautiful, wickedness increased still more in their hearts, and they thought of nothing else but how they could do her an injury.
7.And when he had said that, two great <i>black cats</i> came with one tremendous leap and sat down on each side of him, and looked savagely at him with their fiery eyes.	8.Houses and trees toppled over, the mountains trembled, rocks rolled into the sea, the sky was <i>pitch black</i> , and it thundered and lightened, and the sea came in with <i>black waves</i> as high as church-towers and mountains, and all with crests of white foam at the top.
9.Then came the <i>black dwarf</i> and said to the old man, have you brought with you that which you have promised me.	10.The woman had brought with her into the house two daughters, who were beautiful and fair of face, <i>but vile and black</i> of heart.

11. The boy, however, persisted so long, that at last he told him that without being aware of what he was doing, he had promised him to a <i>black dwarf</i> , and had received much money for doing so.	12. In the gateway stood a maiden of beautiful form and fine face, but she was quite <i>black</i> .
13. And they got so used to him that the doors were never fastened until their <i>black friend</i> had arrived.	14. When Reginer came on this errand, his sister was glad, but the <i>black maiden</i> was jealous of her good fortune, and grew angry above all measure, and said to her mother, 'Of what use are all your arts to us now when you cannot procure such a piece of luck for me.'
15. He was still cursing when a loud growling was heard, and a <i>black bear</i> came trotting towards them out of the forest.	16. Then God was angry with the mother and daughter, and turned His back on them, and wished that they should become as <i>black as night</i> and as ugly as sin.
17. The merchant thought, what can that be but my dog, and did not remember his little boy, so he said yes, gave the <i>black man</i> a written and sealed promise, and went home.	18. And everything happened just as she had said, the <i>black men</i> could not force a single word from him, and on the third night the snake became a beautiful princess, who came with the water of life and brought him back to life again.
19. The <i>black man</i> has no power over me.	20. But the wolf had laid his black paws against the window, and the children saw them and cried, we will not open the door, our mother has not <i>black feet</i> like you, you are the wolf.

Table 8. Text sentence collocations *black*.

To sum up, it seems that the *lessons* of the fairy tales examined concerning the words in question are that: A *woman* might betray, fool, mistreat you (especially when she is your step-mother), be wicked, never satisfied and when she is a wife might be beaten and may disregard her husband. An *old woman* is usually a witch trying to harm or deceive you. When you are *old* you are wicked, while when you are *young* (and beautiful) you have a share in love, and you have good chances of getting married. A *maiden* is white, beautiful, innocent, obedient, well built, might be in trouble but people will help her, might be wise or show signs of vanity. A *day* is white, fair, beautiful and the time when good things happen, while *night* is black, threatening and is the time when bad things happen. Lastly, *white* is beautiful, clean, innocent, connected with positive things or people, while *black* is evil, dangerous, threatening and connected with negative experiences.

5. Comparison of the corpus analysis findings with a children's and an adults' dictionary

As a means of triangulating the results of the corpus analysis, the meaning of the selected words was checked with an adults' (*Chambers English Dictionary* 1990) and a children's (*My First Oxford Dictionary* 1997) dictionary, addressed to native speakers of English. The words were presented in the dictionaries in the following ways: in the adults' dictionary, either formal definitions and verbal equivalents - in Carroll's (1967) terms — or substantive and constructive definitions - Bolinger's (1967) terms - were used to define the words in question. In the children's dictionary example sentences were used to help the readers grasp the words' meanings. Thus, both dictionaries, by using these techniques, "...supplied a series of hints that would relate the unknown to something known; gave the reader a handhold to his/her experience" (Bolinger 1967: 447). That "experience" in the case of the adult's dictionary represents the common-shared experience of the speech community and relates both to the *denotative meaning* and *connotative meaning* of the words. In the case of the children's dictionary, the "experience" presented through the example sentences is related to the direct experience, adults assume, children have of the selected concepts. More specifically the entries of selected words were as follows:

Old

Chambers English Dictionary: 999

advanced in years: having been long or relatively long in existence, use or possession: of a specified (or to be specified) age: of long standing: worn or worn out; out of date: suspended or abandoned: former: old-fashioned: antique: ancient: early: belonging to later life: belonging to former times: denoting anyone or anything with whom or with which one was formerly associated: (of a language) of the earliest, or earliest known, stage: long practised or experienced: having the characteristics of old age: familiar, accustomed: in plenty, in excess or wonderful: a general word of familiar or affectionate approbation or contempt: reckoned according to old style

My First Oxford Dictionary: 72

- 1 Someone who is old was born a long time ago
- 2 Something that is old was made a long time ago
- 3 You say something is old if you have it for a long time

The entry for old in the adult's dictionary includes mostly its denotative meanings and only one positive connotative meaning (familiar), while the entry for old in the children's dictionary included only denotative meanings.

Young

Chambers English Dictionary: 1723

not long born: in early life: in the first part of growth: youthful: vigorous :relating to youth: junior, the younger of two persons having the same name: inexperienced: newly arrived: miniature.

My First Oxford Dictionary: 117

A person or animal that is young was born not long ago

The entry for old in both dictionaries included only its denotative meanings.

Woman

Chambers English Dictionary: 1704

an adult female of the human race: a wife (now dial.): a mistress: the female sex, women collectively (coll): the reverse of Britannia side of coin

My First Oxford Dictionary: 115

A woman is a fully grown female person

The entry for woman in both dictionaries included only its denotative meanings.

*Maiden*Chambers English Dictionary: 860

unmarried: virgin: female: pertaining to a virgin or young woman: consisting of maidens: unpolluted (fig): fresh: new: unused: in the original or initial state: grown from a seed: that has never been captured, climbed, trodden, penetrated, pruned, etc, that has never won a race (of a horse): first

My First Oxford Dictionary

(maiden was not found, so I looked up the definition of the near synonym girl:46)
A girl is a female child or young adult

The entry for maiden/girl in both dictionaries included only its denotative meanings

*Day*Chambers English Dictionary: 361

the time of light, from sunrise to sunset, morning till night: twenty-four hours from midnight to midnight (formely by some reckoned from sunrise to sunrise - by astronomers - from noon): the time the earth takes to make a revolution on its axis this being the sidereal day (between two transits of the first point of Aries, or approximately of the same star), distinguished from the apparent solar day (between two transits of the sun), and the mean solar day (between two transits of the mean, or imaginary uniformly moving sun): morning and afternoon, as opp. to evening and night: the hours devoted to work (working day): a day set apart for a purpose, as for receiving visitors: lifetime: time of existence, vogue, or influence: a time; daylight: the space between mullions of a window: ground surface over a mine

My First Oxford Dictionary: 36

- 1 A day is the twenty-four hours between one midnight and the next
- 2 A day is the time when it is light

The entry for day in both dictionaries included only its denotative meanings.

*Night*Chambers English Dictionary: 969

the end of the day: the time from sunset to sunrise :the dark part of a twenty-four-hour day: darkness: obscurity, ignorance, evil, affliction or sorrow (fig) :death (fig): the experience of a night: a night set apart for some purpose, esp. receiving visitors

My First Oxford Dictionary: 78

Night is the time when it is dark

The adults' dictionary entry for *night* includes both its *denotative meanings* and *connotative meanings* (obscurity, ignorance, evil, affliction or sorrow (fig); death (fig)), while its entry in the children's dictionary includes only its *denotative meaning*.

White

Chambers English Dictionary: 1689

of the colour of pure snow: snowy: of the light complexion characteristic of Europeans; that absorbs the minimum and maximum of light rays: pale, pallid: bloodless: colourless: pure: unblemished: innocent: purified from sin: bright: burnished of silver: light coloured or golden, as wine: clothed in white; pertaining to the Carmelite monks: in continental Europe, anti-revolutionary (politics): auspicious, favourable: reliable, honest: (of a witch) not malevolent, using her power for good purposes: without bloodshed, as a war

My First Oxford Dictionary: 118

The colours are not defined but presented as a picture.

The dictionary entry for white includes both its denotative meanings and connotative meanings (pure, unblemished, innocent, purified from sin, favourable, reliable, and honest). I would also argue that the third meaning (of the light complexion characteristic of Europeans) is both descriptive as well as prescriptive-evaluative thus connotative. In the children's dictionary colours are not defined.

Black

Chambers English Dictionary: 145

of the darkest colour: reflecting no light: used as a classification of pencil-leads to indicate softness in quality and darkness in use: obscure: dismal: sullen: horrible: dusky: foul, dirty; malignant: dark haired; wearing dark armour or clothes: illicit; (of income) not reported in tax returns: unofficial; under trade-union ban: Negro or African, West Indian descent (often offensive; acceptable in the U.S, S. Africa)

My First Oxford Dictionary: 118

The colours are not defined but presented as a picture.

The dictionary entry for black includes both its denotative and connotative meanings (*horrible*, *dirty*, and *malignant*). I would also argue that the definition Negro or African, West Indian descent can also be included in the connotative meanings of the word as it is noted as such (often offensive) and contrasts with the relevant meaning of white in the previous entry.

To sum up, although connotative meanings are included amongst the majority of denotative meanings that make up words' definitions found in the adults' dictionary

examined, only five of them match the connotative meanings of the words examined in the data, namely: night is defined as "evil, death (fig)," meanings that the word night also had in the fairy tales examined. White is defined in the adults' dictionary as "purified from sin", a meaning the word also had in the corpus of the fairy tales examined. Lastly, black is defined as "horrible, malignant", semantic "qualities" the word also had in the extended concordance of the fairy tales examined. On the other hand, if we assume that the example sentences used in the children's dictionary represent children's "experiences", all the concepts presented there, are very simple/basic, and were used as the "ground" upon which further concepts in the fairy tales examined were built. So, it seems that the concepts presented in the fairy tales do not "officially" relate to children's but to adults' experiences, functioning as an index that re-shapes children's pre-existing concepts in ways that are not always "officially recorded". In other words, all the words are being re-indexed for children by rational adults, who, through experiences accessed by context, reconstructed children's direct experiences – as these were perceived and presented in the children's dictionary – to ones that matched, to some extent, to societally accepted ways of talking about certain concepts.

6. Conclusion

Despite the already mentioned limitations of the present analysis, it seems that in the corpus of representative fairy tales analyzed, the specific connotations and semantic associations used, "on their own piece of semantic engineering" - in Stubb's (1996) terms. By using children's pre-existing experiences as presented in the children's dictionary, I will try to demonstrate how this "semantic engineering" worked. It seems that:

The concept of *woman* from the familiar, positive experience of mother, aunt or one of any grown-up female is being re-indexed to negative mental experiences related to treachery and wickedness. The concept of *old woman* from the familiar positive experience of grandmother is being re-indexed mostly to negative mental experiences related to treachery and wickedness. The concept of *young* from the familiar positive concept of children's friends, young animals, is being re-indexed to positive mental experiences related either to physical beauty or future marriage perspectives/love. The concept of *girl* from the familiar positive experience of children's friends, cousins, and neighbours is being re-indexed to positive mental experiences of physical beauty and acceptable behaviour - what a beautiful girl looks like and how she behaves. The concept of *day* from the familiar experience of "the time when there is light", is being re-indexed to positive mental experiences related to beauty and good actions, while *night* from the familiar experience of "the time when it is dark", is being re-indexed to negative mental experiences of danger, ugliness and

threat. Lastly, the concepts of *white* and *black* from the familiar experiences of being “simply” colours, are being re-indexed, the former to positive mental experiences related to physical beauty, innocence, good, and the latter with negative experiences related to ugliness, wickedness and threat.

From a language learning point of view, as a means of socialisation, fairy tales represent the conventional ways of speaking in a society, and as Lee (1992: 76) points out: “(the conventional ways of speaking)... must exert a strong influence on how a child comes to conceptualise many important areas of experience” seem to be responsible for children’s concept formation. In the fairy tales analyzed, the *collocations and semantic/contextual associations* found, played a role in the formation of concepts concerning the words that composed them. Furthermore, applying Stubbs’ (1996: 92) claim that: “...if particular lexical and grammatical choices are regularly made and if people and things are repeatedly talked about in certain ways, then it is possible that this will affect how they are thought about” to the fairy tales analyzed, we can claim that the regular lexical choices made that in turn formed the several *lessons* derived from them, determine the way fairy tales readers view the world, by re-indexing pre-existing experiences. So it seems that fairy tales do not only re-index former experiences to a priori determined and socially accepted ways, but also create *new* concepts that might not be found in dictionaries, but represent accepted ways of speaking in a community. This might have implications in children’s early pragma-semantic competence as formed through early education teaching materials selection. The extent to which these re-indexes influence children’s perception of the world and the extent, to which these views change during adulthood, is a matter of future research.

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About the Author

Argyro Kantara has worked as an EFL/ESP teacher in Athens and Thessaloniki, as an ESP/EAP and linguistics lecturer in private colleges in Greece, as a freelance translator and examiner for the University of Michigan ESOL Examinations. Now she is a research student at Cardiff University in the Center for Language and Communication Research. Her research interests are in the areas of discourse analysis, conversation analysis, intercultural communication, (im)politeness theory and the political news interview.

Address

Cardiff School of English, Communication and Philosophy
Cardiff University
John Percival Building
Colum Drive
CF10 3EU, Cardiff
United Kingdom
e-mail: kantaraa@cardiff.ac.uk